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ABSTRACT

An evaluation was made of the implementation of New York City's After-School Program in 5 community school districts, involving 82 elementary schools with 7,474 children who were regularly left without direct adult supervision before and after school. After the Chapter I introduction which provides background information, an overview, and a description of evaluation procedures, Chapter II of the evaluation report details the selection criteria used for choosing schools, hiring staff members, and determining the eligibility of students for participation. It also describes characteristics of both students and staff members, discusses staff training, and describes the type of programing available in the After-School Program. Chapter III describes staff members' ratings of the goals and objectives of the program, presents attendance patterns, enumerates the strengths of the program from the perspective of the staff members, and delineates the problems experienced by staff during the 1985-86 school year. The fourth and concluding chapter presents the implications of the evaluation findings, makes recommendations for changes in the program, and highlights issues pertinent to the next annual evaluation. (RH)

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O.E.A. EVALUATION REPORT
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June, 1986

Final Evaluation of the 1985-86 After-School Program

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Many people have contributed to this report on the 1985-86 After-School Program. The author of the report, Sandra Horowitz, was also responsible for writing the evaluation proposal, developing the data instruments, carrying out site visits, and conducting the data analysis. Susan K. Boardman, Gary Kose, Carolyn Springer, and Sanford Zenker contributed their valuable skills in making site visits and interviewing the program staff. Both Carolyn Springer and Augustus Olu-Hamilton helped analyze the data, and Lucy Krolian was responsible for typing the text of the report. Finally, many thanks are extended to the various staff members of the After-School Program whose cooperation was so important to the quality of data obtained.

A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The New York City After-School Program provides care for children who are regularly left after school without direct adult supervision because their parents work. In 1985-86, the program was implemented on a demonstration basis in 82 schools in five community school districts (C.S.D.s): C.S.D.s 6, 12, 17, 29, and 31. A total of 7,474 students were reported enrolled in the program.

An average of 96 students (S.D. = 34.8) was enrolled at each After-School Program site; enrollment varied from 51 students at one site to 190 students at another site. Over half (53 percent) of the observed schools reported having a waiting list. These waiting lists held an average of 58 students per school.

POSITIVE STAFF RESPONSE TO PROGRAM

- Seventy-six percent of the staff members felt that the program was responsible for students getting their homework finished. They also said that school-day teachers had commented upon the positive difference in the level of work being done by these students.

- Sixty-two percent of the staff members felt there were improvements in the social behavior of students as well. In fact, 65 percent of the respondents felt that participants had improved their social skills.

- The staff rated the provision of a safe, happy environment as the best single feature of the After-School Program (34 percent). Other positive features included the quality of staff, the provision of academic help, the availability of a place for children to get rid of pent-up energy, and the opportunity for children to associate with each other.

- Staff members responded enthusiastically to the program. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents gave positive responses when asked their overall impression of the program.

PROBLEMS REPORTED BY STAFF

Staff members identified six problems which had concerned them during the course of the year: shortage of equipment, staff, and space; excessive numbers of children on waiting lists; lack of cooperation from school custodians; and parents' lateness in picking up children.

- Fifty-four percent of the staff said that a shortage of materials was a problem; this problem was especially acute in C.S.D. 31.

- Thirty-one percent of all respondents reported that a shortage of staff had been a problem for them. Two of the districts with the lowest staff: student ratios, C.S.D.s 12 and 31, considered a shortage of staff to be a primary problem.

- Fifty percent of the staff members in C.S.D. 12 reported a lack of sufficient space.

- Twenty-three percent of the respondents considered the number of children on waiting lists to be a problem. This was a particular concern in C.S.D.s 6, 12, and 31.

- C.S.D.s 6, 17, and 29 reported having problems with school custodians. Some of the problems appear to stem from a failure of custodial employees to adhere to the terms of the custodians' contract.

- Fifty percent of the staff members in C.S.D. 29 mentioned the problem of parents arriving late to pick up their children. To a lesser extent, staff in C.S.D.s 6, 12, and 17 also found the tardiness of parents to be a problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Staff: student ratios should be reset to a more optimal level; funding should reflect this change.

- A clearly established need should be the criterion for selecting the participating schools in any district.

- Funds for additional space should be provided in schools with a large number of participating students. Access to a telephone must be provided at all sites. Responsibility for care of spaces should be clearly assigned.

- Charging a materials fee might be an option for alleviating the shortage of supplies reported by some schools.

- Greater parent participation in the program is a goal to pursue.

- Staff development should be an ongoing feature of the program; future efforts should consider the use of trained after-school care consultants.

- Parents and students should be surveyed regarding activities to include in the program.
- Sharing of staff positions should be reevaluated in light of its effect on students in the program.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In 1985-86, the Chancellor introduced the New York City After-School Program to serve the needs of a growing number of children who are in self-care, i.e., children who are left regularly without direct adult supervision before and after school. Five community school districts (C.S.D.s) implemented the program in 1985-86 on a demonstration basis: C.S.D. 6 (in eight schools); C.S.D. 12 (in 12 schools); C.S.D. 17 (in 16 schools); C.S.D. 29 (in 16 schools); and C.S.D. 31 (in 30 schools). In all, 82 elementary schools with 7,474 self-care children took part in the program. The Central Board allocated $600 thousand for the After-School Program to each participating district.

Chancellor's Memorandum No. 46 stated that the After-School Program must operate in at least 70 percent of the elementary schools in each district chosen to participate. Hours set for the programs were 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. No fees were to be charged to participants. Additionally, the Chancellor recommended that program activities be comprehensive in nature, including any or all of the following components: education, tutorial, and/or recreation. A minimum staff of one teacher-in-charge, one paraprofessional, one security guard, and one lunchroom worker was required at each participating school. Finally, the program could not supplant any existing program.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Purposes of the Evaluation

The objectives of this evaluation are as follows:

--to document and describe After-School Program implementation in each district;

--to measure overall staff satisfaction with the program;

--to identify features of the program which were seen as important for meeting the needs of the students and staff.

To meet these objectives, the evaluation interviews and staff questionnaires elicited responses concerning curriculum, attendance, staffing, school facilities, program implementation, and goal clarity.

Data Collection Procedures

The Office of Educational Assessment (O.E.A.) designed a structured interview based upon issues identified in current literature*, informal interviews with the five district coordinators, and pilot interviews conducted in C.S.D.s 6 and 17. O.E.A. evaluators used this instrument to interview the teacher-in-charge plus one other staff member, generally a paraprofessional, at each of the 24 randomly selected schools. In addition, all staff members in the selected schools filled out an attitude survey, and the teacher-in-charge also provided basic attendance information through a separate questionnaire.

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*Michelle Seligson, Andrea Genser, Ellen Gannett, and Wendy Gray, School-Age Child Care: A Policy Report (Wellesley, MA.: School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1983); Tracy Huling, School-Age Child Care: What Next? (New York, N.Y.: Neighborhood Family Services Coalition, 1985); Nancy L. Galambos and James Garabino, "Identifying the Missing Links in the Study of Latchkey Children," Children Today, 12, 1983, p. 40.

In addition, two teams of trained observers (two observers to a team) conducted systematic observations at each site in the sample. The teams participated in a three-hour basic training session as well as practice site visits prior to beginning the actual data-collection process. In total, these observations included: 18 recreation periods; 15 sessions of homework; 10 different arts and crafts sessions; five periods of tutorial homework; three English as a Second Language sessions; three mathematics sessions; three computer classes; and single sessions each of Book and Games Club, communication arts, special programs, art, and dance.

The evaluation design included approximately one-fourth of all the participating schools through a stratified random sampling procedure. Evaluators randomly selected four schools from each district, plus an additional two schools randomly chosen from a pool of all the districts taken together. Thus, the evaluation plan specified visits to 22 schools to assess the After-School Program. However, the district coordinator in C.S.D. 29 requested the inclusion of two additional sites from his district because he believed that the random sample did not adequately reflect the diversity of programming in that district.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The second chapter of this report details the selection criteria used for choosing schools, hiring staff members, and determining the eligibility of students for participation. It also describes characteristics of both students and staff members, discusses staff training, and describes the type of programming available in the After-School

Program. Chapter III focuses on the goals and objectives that staff members held for the program, presents attendance patterns, enumerates the strengths of the program from the perspective of the staff members, and delineates the problems experienced by staff during the year. The concluding chapter presents the implications of the evaluation findings, makes recommendations for changes in the program, and highlights issues pertinent to next year's evaluation.

II. ORGANIZATION OF PROGRAM

SELECTION OF SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND STAFF

School selection policies were more inclusive in some districts than in others. District coordinators reported that schools were chosen according to two basic policies: (1) all schools in the district had the opportunity to participate; or (2) need and local accessibility defined which schools were to be included. For instance, C.S.D.s 17 and 29 included all elementary schools in the district. C.S.D. 29 qualified this selection policy to some extent by requiring the participating school to have a registration of 60 students. On the other hand, C.S.D.s 6, 12, and 31 selected schools based on the availability of alternative programs, the levels of remediation necessary, geographic location, and the physical condition of the buildings.

Sixty percent of the staff members reported that their programs used working parents as the criterion for accepting children into the After-School Program. Almost all the remaining staff members indicated that all the children who applied were accepted into their programs. Whether the criterion was specific to the children of working parents or inclusive of all applicants, the teachers-in-charge reported that having working parents was the primary reason children were attending the program in 89 percent of the schools. Eighty-three percent of the staff were satisfied with the selection procedure.

An expressed interest in the program became the primary criterion for choosing staff. Eighty-nine percent of the staff applied or volun-

teered for the jobs they currently hold. Someone associated with the program, e.g., principal of the school or another teacher, invited some of the remaining staff to apply or chose them from existing lists.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Students enrolled in the After-School Program were primarily in the first to fifth grades. Kindergarteners, sixth-graders, and any older children were less likely to be represented on rosters.

The majority of children attended the program to compensate for a lack of adult supervision during the after-school hours. For these children, teachers-in-charge estimated that an average of 64 percent needed academic remediation. They also estimated that 44 percent of those enrolled students who had adequate adult supervision after school needed academic remediation.

For the most part, someone picked up the after-school children at the end of the day rather than let them walk home alone or with other children. This was true for 76 percent of the participants. However, the percentage of children who were picked up varied widely from school to school, from a low of 13 percent in one school to 100 percent of the children in 10 different schools.

STAFF CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAINING

O.E.A. evaluators interviewed 47 staff members across selected schools in the sample: 51 percent of these functioned as the teachers-in-charge; 32 percent served as paraprofessionals; and 13 percent worked as teachers other than the teachers-in-charge. Seventy-four percent of

the staff in the After-School Program worked in the same school during the regular school day.

Work schedules varied for program staff. Slightly more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the teachers-in-charge worked five days a week. Eighteen percent of them worked on alternate days, sharing the position with another teacher. A slightly different version of the alternate-day schedule occurred for 14 percent of the teacher-in-charge staff; here, the teacher-in-charge was assigned to either two or three specific days a week.

Staff other than the teacher-in-charge worked five days a week 62 percent of the time. The remaining 38 percent of other staff members worked on alternate days.

Fifty-eight percent of the staff received some kind of training for the After-School Program. The average length of time spent in training was five hours. These training sessions dealt with programming issues (41 percent), orientation (37 percent), and arts and crafts (22 percent). Other program activities, such as physical education, recreational activities, administrative functions, and staff and parent relationships, received considerably less attention in these sessions.

TYPES OF PROGRAMMING

The After-School Program varied somewhat from district to district as well as from school to school; however, some broad distinctions can be made. These distinctions involve funding, organization, and programming.

Funding for the program in C.S.D. 6 came from several sources in addition to the Board of Education; this district also has considerably

fewer schools than the other districts. These factors enabled C.S.D. 6 to provide after-school programming that was unique among the districts. Staff assigned students to one of six components available during each of three different time periods scheduled for the afternoon. Some components resembled regular school activities: classes in communication arts, mathematics, English as a Second Language, and computers. The recreational component and the book and games club provided far less formal activities. Once or twice a week, students also participated in dance, art, and drama. The C.S.D. 6 program also enjoyed a greater use of space in the schools than did the program in any other district. The program in C.S.D. 6 commonly used as many as three classrooms in addition to the gymnasium, lunchroom, library, and computer area.

In the other four districts, the program divided children into two groups according to age: younger versus older children. Both age groups participated in the following basic activities: homework, recreation, and arts and crafts. Children had arts and crafts two or three times a week as part of the recreational activities.

In all five districts the afternoon usually began with a snack. Milk was the beverage most likely to be served at all schools. Children received various snack foods, such as cupcakes, bagels, donuts, rolls, cookies, and fruit and cheese.

During the spring, a full dinner replaced the snack in several schools in C.S.D.s 12 and 29. Staff in these schools rescheduled activities to allow dinner to be served somewhat later in the day than the snack.

III. PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSE TO PROGRAM

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The majority of the staff (57 percent) rated the provision of a safe environment as the most important goal of the After-School Program. Thirty-two percent felt that academic assistance was the most important goal. Goals mentioned by the remaining staff members were promotion of peer relationships (nine percent) and providing a recreational outlet for children (two percent).

Student Participation

District coordinators reported that there were 7,474 students enrolled in the New York City After-School Program in 1985-86. The average number of students on register at each school was 96 (SD = 34.8). Attendance data for each district are presented in Table 1. Enrollment varied from an average of 70 students in one school to 134 in another district. Four of the five districts reported having a waiting list. These waiting lists ranged from 10 students in one district to 92 students in C.S.D. 17.

TABLE 1

Average Attendance for the Observed Schools
in the 1985-86 After-School Program by District

District	Students							
	Enrolled		Usually Present		Present When Observed		Waiting List	
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.
6	134	13.0	110	0.0	89	31.2	39	26.4
12	134	43.7	88	22.6	84	22.0	0	0.0
17	75	0.0	66	4.7	60	6.8	77	74.2
29	84	27.6	69	23.4	68	20.3	10	0.0
31	72	9.5	57	8.8	55	8.6	17	13.5

Based upon these attendance estimates and the lists of staff provided by the individual district coordinators, staff: student ratios were calculated for each district. These figures appear in Table 2. Observers found the smallest ratio in C.S.D. 6 where there was usually one teacher for every 13 children. The largest ratio occurred in C.S.D. 31 where each teacher monitored an average of 28 children.

TABLE 2

Staff: Student Ratio for the Observed Schools
in the 1985-86 After-School Program

District	Based on Number of Children		
	Enrolled	Usually Present	Observed
6	1:19	1:16	1:13
12	1:34	1:22	1:21
17	1:24	1:22	1:20
29	1:21	1:17	1:17
31	1:36	1:28	1:28

Policy Towards Daily Absences

Absences were primarily handled in one of two ways: absences were recorded and followed up the next day (62 percent); or parents were called the afternoon of the absence (29 percent). In a very few cases, a staff member visited the home following a child's absence (five percent).

Absences Serving as a Disqualification

There appeared to be no district policies concerning excessive, unexplained absences. Staff in six schools reported that a definite number of absences had been established which would serve to disqualify a student from the program: these ranged from four days at one school to two or more straight weeks of absenteeism at three other schools. On the other hand, staff in four schools reported that they had established no set number of absences to disqualify students, but determined this on an individual basis. Staff members at two schools said this problem had not yet occurred for them.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

The staff reported that the After-School Program had a positive effect on children both academically and socially. All the involved schools placed emphasis on homework as a vital component of the afternoon's activities. Seventy-six percent of the staff members felt that the program was responsible for students getting their homework done. Staff felt that the program helped students develop a more positive attitude toward school. They also said that school-day teachers had commented upon the positive difference in the level of work being done by these students.

Sixty-two percent of the staff members felt there were positive differences in the social behavior of students as well. In fact, 65 percent of the respondents felt that participants had improved their social skills.

The staff rated the provision of a safe, happy environment as the best single feature of the After-School Program (34 percent). Twenty-six percent of the staff rated the quality of the staff as the program's best feature; some of the staff lauded the opportunity the program provided for children and teachers to associate on a less formal basis than is possible during the school day. Other positive features were mentioned to a lesser extent: the provision of academic help; the availability of a place for children to get rid of pent-up energy; and the opportunity for children to associate with each other.

Staff members indicated that the children were beneficiaries of the educational aspects of the program. On a scale which ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), staff strongly agreed that the program was beneficial ($\underline{M} = 6.2$). The statement, "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with the way the program has gone," generated a similarly positive response ($\underline{M} = 6.2$).

Staff members responded enthusiastically to the program. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents gave positive responses when asked their overall impression of the program. Among these endorsements were the following: "It's one of the best things that's happened; "Good reaction from parents;" "Good program. Best thing that's happened to schools in the last 10 years;" "It's one of the best things the city

has done in a long time. It takes kids out of the street and any time you can provide a safe environment and proper role models for kids, the money is well spent;" "I wish I had had it for my kids when they were younger;" and "Most of these kids are prisoners in the home otherwise."

PROBLEMS REPORTED BY STAFF

Staff members identified the program weaknesses and problems which concerned them during the course of the year. There were six areas: shortage of equipment, staff, and space; excessive numbers of children on waiting lists; lack of cooperation from school custodians; and parents' lateness in picking up children (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

Percent of Staff Members Reporting a Specific Problem

	Problems					
District	Over Enrollment	Pickup	Custodians	Space	Equip-ment	Staff
6	40%	20%	50%	20%	60%	0%
12	33	33	14	50	33	50
17	12	38	44	12	62	25
29	10	50	57	20	40	30
31	33	0	12	0	83	50

Fifty-four percent of the staff said that a shortage of materials was a problem; this problem was especially acute in C.S.D. 31. In fact, restrictions on the use of school-day equipment compounded the materials shortage felt by many after-school sites. Again, C.S.D. 31 keenly felt these restrictions.

An attitude survey administered to the staff also addressed this issue. Staff members rated statements on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 indicating strong agreement. C.S.D. 31 expressed the greatest agreement ($\underline{M}$ = 5.3) with the statement that materials and equipment had been inadequate; C.S.D. 29 was the least likely to endorse this statement ($\underline{M}$ = 2.6). The remaining districts rated the adequacy of materials and equipment in between these two ratings.

It is likely that the program parameters established centrally had an effect upon the availability of materials for use by after-school children. Districts were required to provide the program free of charge to participants. The only program charging a fee of any kind was C.S.D. 29, which asked for a 20 dollar semi-annual materials fee. This charge was allowed to continue in C.S.D. 29 because it had been charged the previous year in the pilot program; the fee was waived if the family could not afford it. Perhaps the small charge for materials in C.S.D. 29 alleviated to a certain extent the shortages experienced more sharply in other districts.

Thirty-one percent of all respondents reported that a shortage of staff had been a problem for them. Two of the districts with the lowest staff: student ratios, C.S.D.s 12 and 31, considered a shortage of staff to be a primary problem. In both districts, at least half of those interviewed reported that more staff are needed.

The issue of appropriate staff: student ratios is one that deserves additional thought. There is presently no generally accepted standard for levels of child-care staff in relation to students. Some experts in

child care feel that it is impossible for one adult to give more than 10 children the individual attention they each need. This viewpoint is the same as that advocated by the New York City Department of Health. Article 48-A, Section .09 of Title III states: "A group shall not exceed 25 children or youths at any time and there shall be at least one group leader for every 10 children or youths."

The waiting lists at many schools also called into question the capacity of the program to provide services to the children needing care. Twenty-three percent of the respondents considered the number of children on waiting lists to be a problem that concerned them this year. This concern was voiced to a greater extent in C.S.D.s 6, 12, and 31 than in the other districts.

C.S.D. 12 was the only district in which space shortages were pervasive; in this district, fifty percent of the staff were concerned about insufficient space. This problem, however, is really subordinate to another problem staff members discussed; namely, the difficulties they experienced in relation to custodians.

According to staff members and district coordinators, custodians are sometimes not fulfilling their contractual obligations. The agreement between the Board of Education and Local 891, the International Union of Operating Engineers, AFL-CIO, covers the duties of school custodians and school custodian engineers. Custodians in all New York City schools received an increase of 6,750 dollars in their general budget for providing full services to schools between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. This increase occurred regardless of whether or not the school had an After-School Program.

As a consequence of this agreement, custodians can no longer charge opening fees in city schools. Custodians can charge space fees when schools use any space beyond the specified fee area, i.e., space that is the equivalent of one major space (auditorium or gymnasium) plus 15 classrooms or their equivalent square footage of space. The liability for space fees extends only to schools with a floor area of 100 thousand square feet or less; they cannot be charged in schools where the floor space exceeds 100 thousand square feet. In the latter case, all space is free.

The terms of the agreement also call for the custodians to provide full services to schools between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. This includes sweeping all areas used by the After-School Program as well as cleaning up any spills that occur during the serving of snacks. In the districts where dinner was being served, custodians received a special "supper fee" to provide clean-up services.

Despite the contract, staff members in three districts specified that they had problems with custodial staff. In District 29, 57 percent of the respondents reported such problems; half of the resondents in District 6 and 44 percent of the respondents in District 17 also reported these difficulties. Their problems included the custodians' refusal to clean after the program, to provide adequate heating, and to allow staff members to use classrooms for program activities.

The evaluators noted that in some cases the After-School Program staff did not have access to a telephone from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Offices containing telephones were locked at the end of the regular

school day; after-school staff could not use the telephone without paying space fees. Indeed, this situation puts the children and staff at risk.

The final problem mentioned by the After-School Program staff was the incidence of parents arriving late to pick up their children. Fifty percent of the staff members in C.S.D. 29 mentioned this problem. C.S.D.s 17, 12, and 6 also found the tardiness of parents to be a problem, although to a lesser extent.

The evaluators also observed that parent participation appeared to be minimal. A number of schools sent newsletters home to parents as a form of communication. Staff members attempted to touch base with parents when they arrived to pick up their children at 6:00 p.m. Clearly, these parents have little time to spare; however, perhaps some creative ways of involving parents might be found to elicit a higher rate of participation in the program.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

There were 7,474 students enrolled in the After-School Program throughout the city. Eighty-two participating schools hosted an average of 96 students at each site. Staff members were highly trained professionals who worked in the school system during the regular school day. The majority of them considered a safe environment to be the primary purpose of their efforts, but also felt that the children were benefitting substantially from both the academic and the social aspects of the program. Overall, the staff members rated the program very highly.

The fact the 53 percent of the schools had waiting lists which averaged 58 names per site attests to both the need for and the popularity of this program.

Certain of the problems affecting the program during this demonstration year reflect the requirements imposed by central offices on districts which have varying characteristics and physical constraints. For instance, whereas all districts received the same amount of money to fund their programs, they also had to maintain programs in 70 percent of the schools in their district. This meant that C.S.D. 6 with eight schools in the program had considerably more money to spend per school than did C.S.D. 31 with 30 schools in the program. Thus, it's not surprising that C.S.D. 31, more so than other districts, reported a shortage of materials and staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES

The following recommendations address funding decisions as they relate to level of staffing, the number of schools included per district, and current custodial/space ambiguities. We also make four recommendations which deal with the need to assess the activities provided by the program, the feasibility of a materials fee, the optimal role for parents, and the advantage of ongoing staff development activities.

Funding Issues

- Provisions for the staff for the 1986-87 year should reset staff: student ratios to a more optimal number. Funding for the district programs should reflect the new ratio for all participating schools.
- The decision to require the inclusion of 70 percent of all schools in each district appears arbitrary. No systematic needs assessment determined which schools needed the program and which did not. Future funding should be targeted towards schools with clearly established needs.
- Certainly much more attention needs to be given to the custodian situation. Communication lines should be established which stress the responsibility of the custodial staff to the After-School Program. Also, the need of some programs for additional space and the costs for use of additional space should be examined. The use of a telephone should be considered part of the minimal space necessary for running the program.

Procedural Issues

- The shortage of equipment and supplies should be addressed either through funding or the charging of a materials fee. A small fee might increase family commitment to the program. This fee could be waived if the family could not afford to pay.
- Parent participation in and support for the After-School Program should be sought. A parent conference once or twice a year might be considered, or specific social events in which families are invited to participate. Parent advisory boards or parent committees could be considered as a means of involving parents.

- Staff development should become an important part of the program, perhaps involving training consultants from among some of the well-known practitioners in after-school care programs.

GENERAL ISSUES

- There is a need to determine the type of activities the After-School Program should offer. New York State guidelines to school-age programs describe an environment that is more home-like than school-like, emphasizing the development of social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and recreational skills with less emphasis on academic skills. The city's program needs to determine whether after-school programming should be comprehensive (including both academic and social/recreational activities) or be more narrowly focused on just social/recreational activities. Students as well as parents should be included in a survey designed to explore this question.

- While the sharing of staff positions may be very good for the staff, how does it affect the children in the program? If there is an effect on children, does age make a difference in the way children react to the discontinuty of the staff?

- A needs assessment should be conducted to identify those schools and districts most clearly in need of the After-School Program.